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The **DATE** of the **EXODUS**: Does it **MATTER**?

Part 2

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The Date of the Exodus:

What Does the Bible Say and Why Does it Matter? (Part II)

Jonathan Moore, Ph.D.

Article In Brief...

Many scholars argue that the Exodus of the Bible never occurred. Among those who believe it did occur, scholars are divided about when it happened: “early” (1447/1446 B.C.) or “late” (ca. 1250 B.C.). A straightforward assessment of the textual evidence in Scripture leads to the early date of the Exodus, but some scholars believe the archaeological evidence does not support an early date. Instead, they argue it supports a late date of the Exodus and, subsequently, interpret key Bible passages in a way that supports the late date. A re-examination of the available evidence reveals that an early Exodus date is still not only tenable—it is preferable.

[EDITOR’S NOTE: Part I of this two-part series appeared in the June issue of *R&R*. Part II follows below and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended.]

Exodus 1:11 and Rameses

EXODUS 1:11 is one of the most crucial passages in studying the Exodus-Conquest date. According to the passage, “they [the Egyptians] set taskmasters over them [the Israelites] to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Rameses.” For those examining the Exodus, identifying these cities’ location and time of building is key to establishing a potential date for Israelite presence in Egypt and Exodus from Egypt. The major problem and source of debate for scholars concerning this passage is that neither of these cities have been convincingly identified.

For many scholars, the search for the “Rameses” or “Ramesses” in this verse has been founded on the belief that the name is connected to pharaohs of the nearly identical moniker, and thus, the city must have been named after a pharaoh named Rameses. This belief has resulted in a search for the remains of a store city built while Rameses II ruled (1279-1213 B.C.). Those, like Hoffmeier, who begin their examination upon this premise find it impossible for the Exodus to have occurred prior to the reign of a pharaoh named Rameses.¹ In addition, proponents of this theory note that most of the significant archaeological findings as well as extrabiblical sources referencing Pithom and Rameses are from the 12th-13th centuries.²

Several scholars have associated the Rameses of Exodus 1:11 with Pi-Ramesses. The area of Pi-Ramesses

was comprised of several cities that possessed different names throughout different periods in Egyptian history.³ The name Pi-Ramesses was used from the time of Rameses II onward until ca. 1130 B.C. when the site was abandoned for a new capital in Tanis.⁴ Kenneth Kitchen notes that Seti I constructed a palace there, and Rameses II built the store city referenced in this verse.⁵ Hoffmeier adds that Pi-Ramesses was likely started around 1270 B.C.⁶ However, Hoffmeier acknowledges that the site was built upon earlier remains, likely as far back as the reign of Horemheb (1323-1295 B.C.) and maybe even before.⁷

Many scholars have raised serious doubts as to whether Rameses II named the Rameses of Exodus 1:11 after himself. Robert I. Vasholz is unconvinced that a pharaoh would name after himself sites that “were basically depots for the storage of supplies and taxes paid in terms of foodstuffs.”⁸ Vasholz points out that pharaohs typically did not name cities after themselves but after their gods. He notes, for example, Menfe (Memphis), which was later renamed Hitpuah, meaning “spirit of [the god] Ptah.”⁹ The name Rameses means “begotten by Ra,” the god of the Sun. So, if Rameses did name the city of Exodus 1:11 after himself during his reign, then there are some major textual problems that must be overcome. Starting in Exodus 1:11 and reading through to the Exodus event itself in Exodus 12, there spans a substantial amount of time as indicated below:

1. Oppression—including the building of Pithom and Rameses (Exodus 1:11)
2. Growth in Israelite population (Exodus 1:12a)
3. Distress of the Israelites on the part of the Egyptians (Exodus 1:12b)
4. Murder of all newborn Israelite males (Exodus 1:16)

5. Moses is born (Exodus 2:1)
6. The king of Egypt dies while Moses is in Midian (Exodus 2:23)
7. Eighty-year-old Moses confronts the next pharaoh (Exodus 7:7)
8. The Exodus event (Exodus 12)

So, if Pharaoh Rameses II built Pi-Ramesses in Exodus 1 and then died in chapter 2, while Moses was in hiding, he could not have been the pharaoh of the Exodus. Also, Moses was 80 years of age at the time of the Exodus (Exodus 7:7), and the building of Rameses (Exodus 1:11) would have occurred before Moses' birth (Exodus 2:1). Additionally, construction would have happened long before even Rameses came to the throne.¹⁰ Advocates of the late date, like Hoffmeier, however, contend that Hebrew slaves were involved in the construction of the new capital of Rameses II beginning ca. 1270 B.C. (long after Moses would have been born),¹¹ followed by the Exodus just three years later in ca. 1267 B.C.¹² It does not seem feasible to fit the events of Exodus 1:11-12:36 in a three-year timespan.

Archer summarizes this conundrum for late date advocates: "If the exodus took place around 1290 (as most modern scholars suppose), and if Moses was 80 at that time, his birth took place in 1370, or a good 60 years before a Nineteenth Dynasty Rameses ever sat on the throne of Egypt. Therefore, it could not have been at a city named after Rameses II (1299-1232 B.C.) that the Israelites worked (prior to the birth of Moses)."¹³ Unger also observes:

[I]t is by no means certain that the city of Rameses was named after the Pharaoh of that name. In fact, Genesis 47:11 states that Jacob and his family settled in the land of Rameses when they entered Egypt...unless we postulate an anachronism, for which there is not the slightest proof, we must conclude that there was an area by that name before there

was ever a Pharaoh Rameses. It could well be that there had been an ancient Ramesside dynasty long ages before and the Ramesseses of the Nineteenth Dynasty were named for them, the city also having taken this name. In any case, there is no need to assume that the mention of the city of Rameses proves that the Exodus must have taken place during the reign of Rameses II.¹⁴

Even if Pi-Ramesses is the city of "Rameses" of Exodus 1:11, no one has clearly demonstrated that the events of this passage took place during the reign of Rameses II. Dyer argues that establishing the late dating on similar names does not make a strong case for their theory.¹⁵

Early-date scholars, however, have suggested that the name of the store city Rameses is an inspired editorial updating (e.g., by Samuel¹⁶) of an older name (Avaris). Many conservative scholars and archaeologists such as John Bimson, Bryant Wood, Gleason Archer, Michael Grisanti, Douglas Petrovich, and Scott Stripling hold to the view that the scriptural name Rameses was an inspired editorial updating for the purpose of helping the original readers of Exodus locate the city as its original name (Avaris) had faded into obscurity.¹⁷ The Bible contains several examples of names that appear to be updated by an inspired writer before the completion of the final work with the goal of enhancing the level of specificity and detail of the reference. Inspired editorial updating of a text is not in any way surrendering to the Documentary Hypothesis, Source Criticism, or any other such liberal scholarship.¹⁸ One of the more interesting examples of an inspired editorial update is found in Genesis 47:11, where Moses refers to Jacob becoming settled in "the land of the Rameses." This was hundreds of years before the Exodus and well before Rameses II was born. Genesis 12:8 and 13:3 reference Bethel pro-

phetically many years before it was given its name by Jacob in Genesis 28:19. Likewise, Genesis 14:14 references Dan, prior to its naming by the Danites in Judges 18:29, and 1 Kings 13:32 mentions Samaria in anticipation of the name given by Omri in 1 Kings 16:24.¹⁹

In summary, it may be the case, considering the examples cited above, that the name "Raamses" of Exodus 1:11 was a later name used to describe an earlier, lesser-known location. The original location, Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a), corresponds well with the testimony of our earliest Egyptian record of 3rd Century B.C. historian and priest Manetho as quoted by Josephus's *Against Apion*, Book 1. While there are many other supposed examples of inspired editorial updating in the Old Testament, I do believe that there is evidence that there could have been an inspired editor of Exodus (Samuel, Ezra, or some other unknown inspired author) and that such an editor may have changed the name from Avaris or Peru-nefer to Rameses and did so with good reason. Since Moses had written Exodus, the name of that entire site had changed. So, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the *name only* (not the message or any other part of the text) was updated to the name generations would later be able to identify. This phenomenon does not in any way challenge the notion that the Pentateuch was anything less than fully inspired, authoritative, and inerrant.²⁰

Exodus 2:23 and the Sequence of Pharaohs

As referenced previously, Exodus 2:23 describes a critical event to scholars studying the chronology of the Exodus. While Moses was hiding in Midian, "it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died." If the late-date advocates are correct in concluding that

the Israelites built Pi-Ramesses for Pharaoh Rameses II (1279–1213 B.C.), then it was Rameses II who died while Moses was in Midian, thereby creating an opportunity for his return to Egypt. Obviously, if Rameses died before Moses made his way from Midian to Egypt, Moses must have confronted some other Pharaoh. While it may be said that Rameses may have occupied the role of one of the prior oppressing pharaohs, he could not have been both the pharaoh of the oppression and the pharaoh of the Exodus if Exodus 2:23 is conveying historical reality.

Was Rameses II's son and successor, Merneptah (1213-1203 B.C.), the pharaoh of the Exodus? This is entirely unlikely due to one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the 19th century. The Merneptah Stele, discovered in 1896 by William Petrie, dates to the first part of Merneptah's reign.²¹ It contains the earliest confirmed reference to the nation-state "Israel." About the alignment of a late-date Exodus with the Merneptah Stele, Stripling writes: "An exodus in the mid-thirteenth century followed by a forty-year wilderness sojourn and an initial conquest of six years does not allow adequate time for the development and recognition of national Israel at the end of the same century."²² Thus, setting aside the chronological problems late-date proponents face elsewhere in the Bible (1 Kings 6:1), this popular shift to Rameses II, as a pharaoh of the Exodus, stands in direct contradiction to the chronology contained within the first two chapters of Exodus.

It has been argued by late-date advocates that it is possible that the pharaoh of Exodus 1:11 and his building efforts are out of place chronologically—that the verses prior (8-10) describe a different, earlier pharaoh to verse 11. This

shifting, however, only highlights the weakness of the 13th century-date and the Rameses II theory centered around this verse. A.S. Yahuda summarizes the problems with the Rameses-Exodus 1 connection:

I personally can see no strong ground why "the land of Rameses" or the City of Raameses must necessarily be associated with the name of Rameses II, only because it happened that we do not know another previous king of the same name. There are about seventy kings who reigned 400 years before Rameses II, between 1900 and 1600 BC, many of whom are not known to us by name.... Who will venture to say with absolute certainty that there was not among them also a king of the name of Rameses? And after all, must the city and the land of Rameses be connected by all means with the name of a king?²³

In contrast, an early-date Exodus ca. 1446 B.C. aligns with Exodus 2:23 and the timing of the pharaohs. If Amenhotep II (ca. 1455-1418 B.C.) was the Pharaoh of the Exodus (which we contend), then his predecessor (Thutmose III) must have reigned over 40 years before he died according to Exodus 2:23. Adhering to the high chronology of Egyptian history, the reign of Thutmose III was ca. 1504-1450 B.C. (reigning over 50 years).²⁴ Additionally, Exodus 12:29-32 indicates that the Exodus pharaoh survived the 10th plague, implying that he must not have been a firstborn son. Amenhotep II in fact had an older brother named Amenemhat who apparently died before he could assume the throne.

Also, per Exodus 12, the Exodus pharaoh's firstborn died in the 10th plague, thus necessitating that the one who succeeded him could not be his first born. Amenhotep II's successor was Thutmose IV (ca. 1401-1391 B.C.) who claimed himself to have come into power only

after the death of his older brother, the apparent heir to the throne.²⁵

Judges 11:26 and the 300 Years

According to Judges 11:26, Jephthah declares to the Ammonite king, "For three hundred years Israel occupied Heshbon, Aroer, the surrounding settlements and all the towns along the Arnon. Why didn't you retake them during that time?" Though it is difficult to know the exact date of Jephthah, most scholars estimate that his dealings with the Ammonites happened sometime from 1130 to 1073 B.C. Stripling places this event around 1100 B.C.,²⁶ and if this date holds true, $1100 + 300 = 1400$ B.C.²⁷ Importantly, the date aligns well with 1 Kings 6:1 as the Israelites conquered Ammon at the end of their 40 years in the wilderness.²⁸ Thus, if the Israelites had been in the land for 300 years, that would correlate to a time frame ca. 1400 B.C., synchronizing well with the early date of the Exodus. Furthermore, the number of years in the book of Judges representing the cycles of oppression and peace comes to 301 years, not counting the Ammonite oppression of Jephthah.²⁹

Nevertheless, some scholars reject this interpretation of Judges 11:26, including Boling³⁰ and Kitchen, who suggests that Jephthah was a simpleton incapable of conveying chronological information, much less accurate historical details.³¹ Kitchen goes on to write that Jephthah was nothing more than "a roughneck, an outcast" whose words are "nothing more than a brave but ignorant man's bold bluster in favor of his people."³² Kitchen believes that the biblical writers were correct in recording what Jephthah said, but Jephthah's response was ignorant. Either he was unable to know the facts or perhaps he intentionally lied about them to make the case for his own people, certainly not the last

time a leader would have done so. Despite the boldness of Kitchen's assertions, his treatment of Judges 11:26 clearly diminishes the truthfulness of Jephthah,³³ unnecessarily calling into question his ability to recall what was likely well-known information. Davis summarizes this point well:

It is scarcely possible, however, that Jephthah should make such a blunder in the midst of important international negotiations. His knowledge of the Torah is evident from the context of Chapter 11 of Judges. It is doubtful that Jephthah could have exaggerated this number as it was used in the argument to the king.... The King of Ammon had some knowledge of the historical precedence involved in Israel's occupation of the territory of Transjordan (cf. Judges 11:13). Again it would be well to point out that numerical information given in the passage under question does not appear in a poetic section and therefore probably reflects sober fact.³⁴

Lastly, a late-date Conquest of Canaan dated to ca. 1290 B.C. leaves merely 150 years before the rise of King Saul, which was ca. 1050 B.C. Howard summarizes the incongruity of the late-date Exodus in relation to the book of Judges, pointing out that it "seem[s] to be an unreasonably short time frame for these [events] all to have occurred. In an early-date scheme, the numbers in Judges still need to be considered to have overlapped somewhat, but not nearly so drastically as under a late-date scheme."³⁵

However, the 480 years of elapsed time indicated in 1 Kings 6:1 are entirely consistent with the chronology of the book of Judges.³⁶ They are not, however, compatible with an entry into the land in the late 13th or early 12th century B.C. Hebrew scholar and professor Dr. Justin Rogers notes:

The traditional date of 1446 B.C.E for the Exodus and 1406 for the Conquest of Canaan makes sense of the numbers given in both of these texts, literally reckoned.... Even if we grant that 1 Kings 6:1 expresses a symbolic chronology, the 300 years of Judges 11:26 is impossible to overcome. Many Evangelical scholars respond by dismissing the chronology and arguing that we can't trust a wicked man who killed his daughter. This seems to me a clear case of special pleading. Even killers can tell time, and there is a good case to be made that Jephthah wasn't wicked after all (see Hebrews 11:32). It is important to note that the number 300 cannot be schematized, so those who defend a 13th century date of the Exodus must ignore or reject Judges 11:26.³⁷

1 Chronicles 6:33-37 and the Generations

First Chronicles 6:33-37 indicates there were 18 generations from the time of Korah (Numbers 16) to the time of Heman, a leading musician from the time of David. Adding one more generation to get to Solomon's era would constitute 19 generations from the Exodus to Solomon. If one accepts what is widely supported in the literature, in that 25 years represents one generation, then the equation is as fol-

lows: 19 generations × 25 years = 475 years.³⁸ Stripling summarizes the significance of this equation:

When 475 is added to 967 B.C. (Solomon's fourth regnal year), we land in the mid-fifteenth century (1442 B.C.). If the exodus occurred in the mid-thirteenth century, the average length of the nineteen generations from Korah to Solomon would be approximately 15.2 years. This is highly improbable, especially since not all the ancestors of Heman would have been firstborn.³⁹

Thus, 1 Chronicles 6:33-37 correlates well with the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1.

Ezekiel 40:1 and the Jubilee Year

Ezekiel 40:1 represents another compelling argument for the early date of the Exodus as this passage seems to indicate that it was Rosh Hashanah⁴⁰ and also the tenth of the month when Ezekiel saw his vision in 574 B.C. Knowing that Rosh Hashanah was known to be on the tenth of the month only at the start of the Jubilee Year (Leviticus 25:9-10), both the Talmud ('Arakin 12b) and the Seder Olam 11⁴¹ record 17 cycles from Israel's entry into Canaan until the last Jubilee in 574 B.C., 13 years after Jerusalem's destruction.⁴² A Sabbatical year was due to begin in Tishri of 588 B.C. based upon Zedekiah's release of slaves in that year (Jeremiah 34:8-

(cont. on p. 8)

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10). Later Jewish practice was to associate a Sabbatical year with the release of slaves, in keeping with that year being called a year of release in Deuteronomy 15:9. This was fourteen years (two Sabbatical cycles) before Ezekiel's Jubilee. If the high priests began counting years when they entered the land in 1406 B.C. (cf. Leviticus 25:2-10), then these Jubilee cycles appear to agree exactly with that date.⁴³ This approach to establishing the date of the Exodus corroborates the 1406 B.C. date and stands on its own, irrespective of the plain reading of 1 Kings 6:1.

Young notes that Israel's priests would have begun counting the Sabbatical and Jubilee cycles when they entered the land in Nisan of 1406 as they were commanded to do in Leviticus 25:1-10.⁴⁴ This alone could explain how Ezekiel, as a priest, would have known when Sabbatical and Jubilee Years were appointed. According to Stripling, Tishri 10 of 574 B.C. was the Day of Atonement.⁴⁵ Since the Jubilee year was identical to the seventh Sabbatical year, the first year of this cycle must have been 48 years earlier, starting in 622 B.C.⁴⁶ Stripling summarizes the importance of this text:

The Seder Olam, ch. 11, and the Babylonian Talmud record that Ezekiel's vision was at the end of the seventeenth Jubilee cycle and that another Jubilee was due in the eighteenth year of Josiah (623/22 B.C. by modern scholarship). Both figures place the start of counting for the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years in 1406 B.C., in agreement with the 1446 date for the exodus calculated from 1 Kgs 6:1 and the subsequent forty years in the wilderness.⁴⁷

Taking 1406 B.C. as the year that Israel entered Canaan, substantiation of this date can be affirmed not only from the chronological note of 1 Kings 6:1, but also from the 17 Jubilee cycles spanning the time from 574 B.C. to the first Jubilee

celebrated upon Israel's entry into Canaan (17 cycles \times 49 years = 833 years + 574 [end of the 17th Jubilee] = 1407 B.C.). This date supports an entry into Canaan in that year since Israel was to start counting the cycles when they entered the land of Canaan (Leviticus 25:1-10).⁴⁸ Wood and Young summarize the implications of this data:

[T]he information in 1 Kgs 6:1 could not have originated in exilic or post-exilic times, as held by Wellhausen, Burney, Hawkins, and a host of other scholars. Only a writer that had access to genuine chronological data could have calculated a time from the exodus to the start of Temple construction that was compatible with the Jubilee calendar as constructed from the Jubilees in the days of Josiah and Ezekiel. It is this calendar that provides a date for the entry into Canaan that is in precise agreement with the 480th-year datum of 1 Kgs 6:1. When Thiele's date for the division of the kingdom is combined with a literal reading of 1 Kgs 6:1, the resulting dates for the exodus and conquest are in perfect accord with the multiple phenomena that have been cited related to the Jubilees and Sabbatical years. All this is explained by a hypothesis that is the quintessence of simplicity: Israel entered the Promised Land in 1406 B.C. with the only credible source for the Jubilee and Sabbatical-year legislation that has ever been postulated, the book of Leviticus, in its possession.⁴⁹

While Wood and Young advocate that Ezekiel 40:1 was at "the beginning of the year" as a reference to the seventh month of the year, Tishri, some disagree with this interpretation noting instead this is as a reference to Abib (Nisan). Fishbane asserts that the assignment of a seventeenth Jubilee to the Ezekiel 40 passage is a back-assessment and midrashic speculation.⁵⁰ Accord-

ing to Hawkins, the Torah stipulated that the New Year was to be inaugurated with Abib (Nisan), not Tishri.⁵¹ During the instructions about the departure from Egypt and the Passover, Exodus 12:2 states that "this month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first month of the year for you." While many of the identified Sabbatical years noted in Young's argument are contested,⁵² if the Seder Olam and the Babylonian Talmud accurately indicate that Ezekiel's vision was at the end of the 17th Jubilee cycle and that another Jubilee was due in the eighteenth year of Josiah, this supports the hypothesis that the counting for the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years **started** in 1406 B.C., in agreement with the 1446 date for the exodus calculated: see 1 Kings 6:1 and then add 40 years in the wilderness.⁵³ Despite many attempts to nullify the plain meaning of 1 Kings 6:1 and the denial that Ezekiel saw the beginning of a Jubilee on Tishri 10 of 574 B.C., as Stripling notes, no exegetes have been able to provide an adequate response to this amazing "coincidence."⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

IN the case of the Exodus, the Bible serves as the most complete ancient written source, and it should be read as a historically reliable account. As Stripling aptly points out, "Any proposed discrepancy must be evidence-based, not an argument from silence."⁵⁵ Whenever an alleged textual discrepancy occurs, it is understandable for one to seek extrabiblical elucidation; however, while many claim contradictions exist within the biblical texts, none hold up to scrutiny.

Though dubious hermeneutics and biased archaeological interpretations continue to engender doubts and uncertainty about the historicity of the Exodus and Conquest, the

veracity and reliability of the biblical text is preeminent over any chronological challenges. Based on the witness of the above biblical passages, the data clearly points to the 15th century. The two most unequivocal passages from the HB concerning the Exodus include the “480 years” in 1 Kings 6:1 and “300 years” in Judges 11:26—both pointing to an early Exodus.

While dating the Exodus to the 13th century B.C. is currently mainstream among biblical scholars and archaeologists, reinterpreting or rejecting the plain reading of numerous biblical passages undermines the validity of the biblical text. Though these scholars continue to promote a late-date Exodus based upon questionable exegesis of 1 Kings 6:1 among other passages, nowhere in the Bible is a large number (such as “480 years”) used to symbolize a certain number of generations, and nowhere in the Bible is it hinted that a “full” or ideal generation was 40 years in length. Likewise, late-date adherents cannot sufficiently resolve Jephthah’s 300 years and the timeframe of Judges. And while Rameses II is often identified as the pharaoh of the Exodus based on Exodus 1:11, this too requires manipulation of the biblical text—specifically Exodus 2:23, indicating the death of the pharaoh of Exodus 1:11 before Moses’ return to Egypt.

While debate will certainly continue concerning nearly every line of argumentation regarding the date of the Exodus, the problems that exist for late-date advocates far outweigh those faced by advocates of the early date. Moreover, those who defend the late date cannot explain why the early date harmonizes perfectly with so many scriptural passages, clearly placing the Exodus in the 15th century B.C.⁵⁶

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Rameses I had a brief reign in the 1290s B.C., which still precludes the possibility of an earlier date Exodus for those who support this viewpoint.
- ² Hoffmeier (2007), pp. 234-235.
- ³ Bryant G. Wood (2003), “From Ramesses to Shiloh: Archaeological Discoveries Bearing on the Exodus-Judges Period,” in *Giving the Sense: Understanding and Using Old Testament Historical Texts*, ed. David M. Howard, Jr. and Michael A. Grisanti (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel), pp. 260-262.
- ⁴ Kenneth Kitchen (2003), *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 255.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 256.
- ⁶ Hoffmeier (2007), pp. 233-234.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 233; Pi-Ramesses was considered the greatest city in Egypt, rivaling even Thebes to the south. It has been hypothesized that the name could mean “House of Rameses” (also given as “City of Rameses”) and was constructed close by the older city of Avaris.
- ⁸ Robert I. Vasholz (2006), “On the Dating of the Exodus,” *Presbyterion*, 32:111.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Carl G. Rasmussen (2003), “Conquest, Infiltration, Revolt, or Resettlement?” in *Giving the Sense: Understanding and Using Old Testament Historical Texts*, ed. David M. Howard, Jr. and Michael A. Grisanti (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel), pp. 143-44; Peter A. Clayton (1994), *Chronicles of the Pharaohs* (New York: Thames & Hudson), p. 145.
- ¹¹ Kitchen dates the Exodus to ca. 1260 B.C. making Moses’ birth ca. 1340 B.C. According to Kitchen, Rameses reigned (starting at the age of 25) from ca. 1279-1213 B.C. See Kitchen, pp. 159,307,359.
- ¹² Hoffmeier (2007), pp. 225-247.
- ¹³ Gleason L. Archer (1998), *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody), pp. 231-232.
- ¹⁴ Unger (1966), p. 107.
- ¹⁵ Charles H. Dyer (1983), “The Date of the Exodus Reexamined,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 140[559]:226.
- ¹⁶ It is traditionally held that Samuel wrote the book of Judges, with particular attentiveness to explaining to his own population the geographical names as they were “this day.” It is possible Samuel may have updated the names in Genesis post Ramesside 19th Dynasty ca. 11th century B.C. [C.J. Gosling (1986), *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), *The Bible Student’s Commentary*, trans. R. Togtman, pp. 217-23].
- ¹⁷ See Christopher Eames (2022), “The ‘Rameses’ of Exodus 1:11: Timestamp of Authorship? Or Anachronism?,” <https://armstronginstitute.org>; John J. Bimson (1981), *Redating the Exodus and Conquest, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Almond Press, second ed.), 5:30-60; D.M. Rohl (1995), “A Test of Time,” *The Bible—From Myth to History* (London: Century), 1:299-325; Bryant G. Wood (September 2005),

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July 31	Bartlett, TN	(901) 386-3030

"The Rise and Fall of the 13th Century Exodus-Conquest Theory," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 48[3]:479; Douglas Petrovich (2006), "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," *The Master's Seminary Journal*, 17[1]:81-110; Stripling, p. 53.

¹⁸ Inspired editorial updating could include the reference to the death of Moses [Deuteronomy 34; see John William McGarvey (1902), *The Authorship of the Book of Deuteronomy* (Montgomery, AL: Alabama Christian School of Religion), p. 199—"We have now reached the end of the book, with the exception of the account of the death of Moses, and some comments on his career, all of which undoubtedly came from the pen of some later writer or writers."], the death of Joshua (Joshua 24:29-33), as well as the arrangement and transitional verses between the books of the Psalms (Psalms 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48), including the phrase, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended" (Psalm 72:20). The occurrences of the phrases, "until this day," "to this day," and other variations (Genesis 32:32; Deuteronomy 3:14; 10:8; 29:28; Joshua 7:26; 8:28; 9:27; et al.) could be included among examples of inspired editorial updating.

¹⁹ It is possible that Dan refers to land named in Moses' day, which later contained a city by the same name.

²⁰ Gleason Archer contends that the final chapter of Deuteronomy is "demonstrably post-Mosaic." Gleason Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, updated and rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1994), p. 276. Thus, an unnamed inspired author added ch. 34 sometime after Moses completed his work on the Pentateuch and both prior to and after the addition of ch. 34, the Pentateuch was fully inspired, authoritative, and inerrant.

²¹ William M. Flinders Petrie (1896), *Six Temples at Thebes* (London), p. 13.

²² Scott Stripling (2021), "The Early Date: The Exodus Took Place in the Fifteenth Century B.C.," in *Five Views on the Exodus: Historicity, Chronology, and Theological Implications*, ed. by Mark D. Janzen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic), p. 42.

²³ A.S. Yahuda (1935), *The Accuracy of the Bible: The Stories of Joseph, the Exodus and Genesis Confirmed and Illustrated by Egyptian Monuments and Language* (Boston: E.P. Dutton & Co.).

²⁴ There is significant disagreement among Egyptologists over the year of Thutmose III's accession, with three prevalent views: the "high chronology" dates it to ca. 1504 B.C.; the "middle chronology" dates it to ca. 1490 B.C.; and the "low chronology" dates it to ca. 1479 B.C. The high chronology is preferred by Shea (1982, pp. 230-

238), Petrovich (2006, pp. 81-110), and Stripling (pp. 34-35) because of its agreement with the Ebers Papyrus and with the timing of the second Palestinian campaign of Amenhotep II. It is my contention that the high chronology better matches the biblical literature along with the astronomical date in the Ebers Papyrus: Thutmose I (ca. 1529-1516 B.C.), Thutmose II (ca. 1516-1506 B.C.), Queen Hatshepsut (ca. 1504-1484 B.C.), Thutmose III (ca. 1506-1452 B.C.), and Amenhotep II (ca. 1455-1418 B.C.).

²⁵ Erected during the first year of Thutmose IV's reign, the Dream Stele is a granite inscription fitted between the paws of the Great Sphinx of Giza. Commissioned by Thutmose IV himself, the inscription essentially publicly declares his divinely inaugurated reign while also admitting that he was **not** the firstborn who was heir to the throne.

²⁶ Stripling, pp. 24-25.

²⁷ Unger (2008), p. 148; Kitchen, p. 207; Eugene H. Merrill (2008), *Kingdom of Priests* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, second ed.), p. 103.

²⁸ Stripling, p. 25.

²⁹ T.J. Betts (2008), "Dating the Exodus," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 12[3]:86.

³⁰ Boling (1975), p. 204 claims that the "300 years" is a gloss.

³¹ Kitchen, p. 209.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ John J. Davis (1971), *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 31.

³⁵ David M. Howard (1998), *Joshua: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Broadman & Holman Publishers), p. 39.

³⁶ As Paul Ray (2005, pp. 93-104), Andrew Steinmann (2005, pp. 491-500), and other authors have identified, there is some degree of overlap among some of the judgeships; they seem generally to view the appearance of the judgeships in the book of Judges as occurring mostly in chronological order. Based on his determinations of which judgeships overlap and which do not, Steinmann (2005), pp. 491-500 even reconstructs an "absolute" chronology.

³⁷ Justin Rogers (October 3, 2023), personal correspondence.

³⁸ See Betts, p. 85.

³⁹ Stripling, p. 25.

⁴⁰ Rosh Hashanah, also known as the Day of Trumpets, was one of the "appointed feasts of the LORD" given to Israel in the HB. The Hebrew word, *teruah* literally means "to shout or make a noise". This feast falls on the first day of the Hebrew month of Tishri corresponding to September or October. "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the people of

Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present a food offering to the LORD'" (Leviticus 23:23-25). Rosh Hashanah always falls on the seventh new moon of the Jewish year and begins a ten-day period preceding the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, the Day of Atonement.

⁴¹ The Seder Olam, "Book of the Order of the World," is an ancient history of Israel written in Hebrew by Babylonian talmudists about A.D. 160. It contains a chronology of the history of the Jewish people from Adam until the revolt of Bar Kokba in the reign of emperor Hadrian. Although many other works have based their work on the Seder Olam chronology, there are areas that need revision and correction. Later updated in Seder Olam Zutta in the 8th century A.D., Seder Olam remains a valuable historical resource, though it is not inspired.

⁴² Ibid., p. 34.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Rodger C. Young (2006a), "Seder Olam and the Sabbaticals Associated with the Two Destructions of Jerusalem: Part II," *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 34:252-254.

⁴⁵ Stripling, p. 34.

⁴⁶ Wood and Young, 51[2]:225-243.

⁴⁷ Stripling.

⁴⁸ Rodger C. Young (December 2003), "When Did Solomon Die?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 46[4]:602.

⁴⁹ Wood and Young, 51[2]:242.

⁵⁰ Michael A. Fishbane (2016), *Midrash Unbound: Transformations and Innovations*, ed. Joanna Weinberg (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization in association with Liverpool University Press), p. 121.

⁵¹ Ralph K. Hawkins (2008), "The Date of the Exodus-Conquest is Still an Open Question: A Response to Rodger Young and Bryant Wood," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 51[2]:245-266.

⁵² Hoffmeier (2021), p. 40-44.

⁵³ Rodger C. Young (2006b), "The Talmud's Two Jubilees and Their Relevance to the Date of the Exodus," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 68:77-82; Andrew E. Steinmann (2011), *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* (St. Louis: Concordia), p. 51.

⁵⁴ Stripling, p. 56.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

⁵⁶ Special thanks to Dr. Scott Stripling, provost and professor of biblical archaeology at The Bible Seminary in Katy, Texas, for taking the time to review and provide feedback on this article. As always, your input is invaluable.

Is Jesus Referred to as God in Hebrews 1:8?

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

CONSIDERABLE discussion has surrounded the meaning of Hebrews 1:8 which reads in the NKJV: “But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.’” This verse is actually a quotation of Psalm 45:6. The 2013 edition of the Jehovah’s Witnesses *New World Translation* renders Psalm 45:6 as “God is your throne forever and ever.” Moving to the Hebrews writer’s quotation of Psalm 45:6, the *New World Translation* 2013 edition reads: “But about the Son, he says: ‘God is your throne forever and ever....’” Observe that these renderings depict God the Father as saying to Jesus the Son that God the Father is Jesus’ throne. Apart from the fact that the rendering is nonsensical, it flies in the face of Greek grammar and linguistic considerations.

The discussion centers around whether “God” (*theos*) is intended to be the subject, or a predicate nominative, or a vocative nominative. If the first is intended, the phrase would be translated “God is your throne.” If the second is intended, the phrase would be rendered “your throne is God.” If the third possibility, the vocative nominative, is intended, the phrase should be translated “Your throne, O God, is forever....” The bulk of scholarship treats the third possibility as the appropriate rendering based on strong linguistic/grammatical evidence for the vocative use in which Jesus is addressed as “God.” Wallace offers an extensive discussion of the three syntactical possibilities and gives four grammatical reasons why the third option is the correct one.¹

Additional Greek scholars confirm Wallace’s observations. For

example, in his *Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament*, Samuel Green notes: “When the Nominative is used for the Vocative in direct address, the Article is prefixed” and he gives Hebrews 1:8 as an instance of this Greek idiom, describing it as “elliptical.”² Alford indicates either of the first two renderings “seems forcing them from their ordinary construction,” describing the rendering “Thy throne is God” as “repugnant to the decorum.”³ Noting that the nominative case is often used for the vocative, Clarke notes that “the original Hebrew cannot be consistently translated any other way” and that the predicate nominative rendering “will not make the sense contended for without adding *esti* to it” (*esti* being the third person singular of the verb “to be”—DM).⁴ Indeed, Lenski rightly observes that “here we have a vocative even in the Hebrew as well as in the LXX [Septuagint—DM] and in Hebrews, and only the unwillingness of commentators to have the Son addressed so directly as *Elohim*... ‘God,’ causes the search for a different construction.... The Son is ‘God’ in the fullest sense of the word.”⁵ Delitzsch similarly observed: “God is neither the substance of the throne, nor can the throne itself be regarded as a representative or figure of God: in this case the predicative *Elohim* would require to be taken as a genitive...which, however, cannot possibly be supported in Hebrew by any syntax.”⁶ In his classic treatment of the Psalms, Alexander likewise opposed the first two possibilities: “To avoid the obvious ascription of divinity contained in the first clause, two very forced constructions have been proposed.... The explanation of *God* as a vocative is

not only the most obvious,...but is found in all the ancient versions and adopted in the New Testament.”⁷ In his celebrated treatment of the psalms, Leupold agreed that the third possibility is “the simple and obvious translation, upheld by all the prominent versions.”⁸ Barnes asserted that Psalm 45:6 “is undoubtedly an address to the ‘king’ here referred to as God—as one to whom the name God may be properly applied; and, as applied to the Messiah by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it clearly proves that Christ is Divine.”⁹ In his comments on Hebrews, Barnes adds: “The word *God* should be taken in its natural and obvious sense.... The *form* here—the *God*—is in the vocative case and not the nominative.... This then is a direct address to the Messiah, calling him God.... full proof that the Lord Jesus is divine.”¹⁰ Linguistic authorities could be multiplied endlessly. The Jehovah’s Witnesses renderings of Psalm 45:6 and Hebrews 1:8 are unjustifiable. Jesus is God.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Daniel Wallace (1996), *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 59; also Daniel Wallace (2000), *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 36.
- ² Samuel Green (1880), *Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament* (New York: Fleming Revell), pp. 213,224.
- ³ Henry Alford (1980 reprint), *Alford’s Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 20.
- ⁴ Adam Clarke (n.d.), *Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon), pp. 365-366.
- ⁵ R.C.H. Lenski (2001 reprint), *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), p. 54.
- ⁶ F. Delitzsch (1976 reprint), *Commentary on the Old Testament: Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 5:82-83.
- ⁷ Joseph Alexander (1975 reprint), *The Psalms Translated and Explained* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 203.
- ⁸ H.C. Leupold (1969 reprint), *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 361.
- ⁹ Albert Barnes (2005 reprint), *Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 32.
- ¹⁰ Albert Barnes (2005 reprint), *Notes on the New Testament: Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 38.



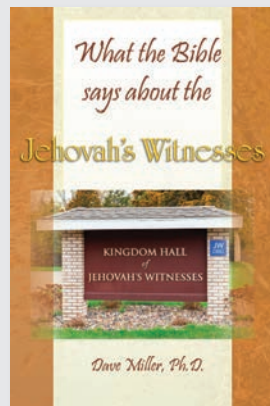
NOTE FROM *The Editor*



Newest Book in the *What the Bible says about... Series*

If God exists and the Bible is His all-authoritative revelation to humanity, then everyone should care deeply about what the Bible says regarding any and every subject. What does the Bible say about our purpose in life? What does it say about how we should use our time, money, words, and influence? What does the Bible say about sexuality and marriage? And, among the many thousands of other questions, we should seriously ponder what the Bible says about the Church that Jesus promised, purchased (with His blood), and of which He is the head. Does God want us to become a member of the Church of His choice, or do we have His blessing to join any church of *our* choosing?

In AP's latest addition to the *What the Bible says about...series*, Dave Miller has penned a profoundly enlightening and empowering 174-page book on *What the Bible says about the Jehovah's Witnesses*. Dave focuses throughout the book on the most significant difference between what the Bible teaches about Jesus and the Godhead versus what Jehovah's Witnesses teach (and what their Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society publishes). If Jesus is Divine, then Jehovah's Witnesses are



in serious, heart-breaking error and in need of the Truth (since they contend that Jesus is not Deity, but rather a non-eternal, created, angelic being). What could be more important to study with our neighbors than this central issue? After all, did Jesus not say, "[U]nless you believe that **I am**, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24, NASB)?

To the credit of Jehovah's Witnesses, they are often in communities going house to house, sharing with others what they believe to be the truth. Yet sadly, they are in grave error about Jesus and seriously need Christians to share with them in a loving manner the biblical Truth about the nature of Jesus Christ and the reality of the Trinity.

Why not purchase multiple copies of AP's latest book—one for yourself (to read and to refer back to) and several copies to give to others (including especially Jehovah's Witnesses)? May God help us to "be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks" us "a reason for the hope" that we have in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:15).

Eric Lyons

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